

black holes + origins

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 03 Jul 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/910>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Peter Stephenson — 03 Jul 1998, 10:28

I suspect prion's right about what a real black hole would do to the sun. I don't necessarily think that matters to Wolfe. (He doesn't necessarily believe in wooden spaceships with sails, either.)

The following was probably not known to Wolfe, but I find it interesting anyway --- it show the way his worlds suck in all known and unknown facts about the universe and spit them out completely warped. (Warp factor 10, in fact.)

The growth of black holes is related to thermodynamics: their entropy (loosely, disorder, but it is a well defined physically quantity, something that often gets ignored in general discussions) is proportional to their area. So their behaviour seems to be related to the arrow of time; at least, the growth of disorder is the only physical quantity definitely related to that as far as seems to be known at present. Now, there's a speculation by Hawking that black holes are in fact white holes! Black holes radiate by Haking radiation: in a universe in equilibrium, they radiate as much as they suck in; only in our temporally lop-sided do they seem to go only one way.

So the relevant point is just that Severian's journey back in time to be the Conciliator, and the apparent non-linear time associated with the white fountain, actually seem to be vaguely related to the physics. Which is typically weird.

Origins of the torturers' guild: I had them mentally associated with some of the orders of flagellants who roamed Europe in the middle ages: there was an article about the remnants of one in the Italian magazine `Medievo' a couple of months ago; they were hooded, but wore white, not fuligin. These people were certainly `seekers after truth and penitence', but it was their own, not other people's. The ambiguity of that pharse has always tickled me.

Penitenzeagite,
corncrake